

~~SECRET~~~~CONFIDENTIAL~~PROJECT PROPOSAL: THE SOUTHWESTERN FRONTIER OF CHINA1. The problem

Chinese Communists are now establishing their control over Sinkiang province, at the western end of the India-China frontier, and over Sikkim province, at the eastern end. They appear to be planning for the eventual penetration of Tibet, which occupies the middle section of the frontier. In this situation the long undefined southwestern border of China might play an important role in the southward advance of Communism in Asia. This border stretches for some 3000 miles between Pakistan, India, Nepal, and Bhutan on the south and China, including Tibet, on the north.

It is desirable to examine the frontier region from the geographical viewpoint, as apposed to the strictly political viewpoint, in an attempt to evaluate the factors present on the ground which would make Chinese Communist penetration easy or difficult, and the factors which could be exploited for a Chinese Communist advance, as well as to estimate the value of the different areas along the frontier as springboards for further Communist penetration into India and Pakistan. Such a study would be useful not only for itself but as something on which further current political estimates could be based.

2. Outline of the study

The outline given below, or variants thereof, would be applied to the following areas: (a) Frontiers of southern Sinkiang and western Tibet; (b) the central Tibetan frontier (Nepal, Sikkim and the Chumbi valley, Bhutan); (c) northern Assam hill tracts. Each item in the outline would be treated only in sufficient detail to bring out its bearing on the estimate. A basic study is not intended.

OUTLINE1. Topography: how formidable is the barrier zone?

- (a) Mountain chains and valleys
- (b) Glaciers
- (c) Hydrography
- (d) Passes
- (e) Habitable areas
- (f) Climate as a barrier

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2. Cultural orientation of the people: Chinese and Tibetan vs. Indian, or local cultures vs. outside cultures.

3. Economic orientation.

(a) Degree of dependence of the frontier areas on specific outside areas.

(b) Trans-frontier trade routes and types of trade.

(c) Transportation facilities.

(d) Resources of the frontier region of value to the outside world.

4. De facto control and boundary claims.

(a) Areal extent or political orientation of Indian and Pakistani control on the one hand and Chinese and Tibetan on the other.

(b) Type of control or political orientation: Complete or nominal; with local approval or by force; long-standing and traditional or recent?

(c) Areas having considerable autonomy: Nepal, Bhutan, hill states, tribal areas.

(d) Boundary claims of India-Pakistan and China: history of past negotiations.

3. Questions to be answered by the estimate.

(a) Is the area easily accessible from the outside, or is it difficult to penetrate or to cross?

(b) Would it be of value to the Communists either in itself or as a spring-board for further penetration southward?

(c) Are the people by tradition and culture oriented toward China and Tibet, and would the people follow the lead of a Communist China and Tibet for cultural reasons?

(d) Do the people have strong local loyalties and traditions, or loyalties to an Indian culture which would make them resistant to overtures from Communist China and Tibet?

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(e) Is the area dependent on Communist areas for outside supplies, or would its dependence on supplies from the south be a means of keeping it out of the Communist camp?

(f) Would it be comparatively easy for Communists to infiltrate by way of trade routes and trade?

(g) Are the people antagonistic to the present political regime, thus making them ripe for Communist penetration?

(h) What claims to territory do the Chinese Communists inherit from the Nationalists that they could exploit? What is the validity of these claims?

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